



Martha Ryan Cipher Book (Coll. #1940)
Southern Historical Collection, UNC-Chapel Hill

Introductory Research Seminar

HIS 709
Fall 2008

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Hours: by appointment

*Please note: the quickest way to communicate with me is through **email** rather than through my office phone.

Course Objectives

If we knew what we were doing, it wouldn't be called Research.
—A . Einstein

This course is designed as an advanced introduction to professional research practice. You will develop your own research project based on your individual interests. But this course will not operate as if you were pursuing a set of unrelated independent studies. Though your topics will differ widely, you will all be facing similar research and writing problems: finding primary sources, understanding what your evidence means, presenting your findings in an interesting and compelling interpretation. Thus the subject of this course is not based on any particular historical period or topic, rather it is the historical method—the process of historical investigation, and particularly the role of writing in the research process. We will follow the approach of Booth, Colomb, and Williams, who explained in *The Craft of Research* that “writing is not just the last stage of a research project but from its beginning a guide to critical thinking.”

Your primary goal in this course is to write a compelling proposal for an original research project. You will develop the proposal in stages and, as in any professional grant competition, peer review will be an important part of the research process in the course.

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

- Recognize and explain the AHA standards of professional conduct and research practice.
- Explain the role of archivists in the research process and use archival finding aids effectively as research tools for your project.
- Construct a meaningful original research problem with clearly defined research goals.
- Construct a well-designed research bibliography that contains the most relevant primary and secondary sources for your project.
- Demonstrate your mastery of historiography by explaining the significance and contribution of your research to the appropriate historical field(s) of scholarship.

- Identify and apply the best methodologies for successfully addressing your research goals.
- Use NEH guidelines to identify and employ best practices in grant proposal writing in the humanities.

Course Readings

Gaddis, John Lewis. *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Required Style Manual:

Kate Turabian. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Journal Articles (Journal Finder and Reserves):

Grigg, Susan, "Archival Practice and the Foundations of Historical Method," *Journal of American History* 78 (June 1991): 228-239.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd. "You Must Remember This": Autobiography as Social Critique," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 2. (Sep., 1998), pp. 439-465.

Halpern, Rick. "Oral History and Labor History: A Historiographic Assessment after Twenty-Five Years," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 2. (Sep., 1998), pp. 596-610.

Kammen, Michael G. "An Americanist's Reprise: The Pervasive Role of Histoire Probleme in Historical Scholarship Concerning the United States Since the 1960s," *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Special Issue: The Challenge of American History. (March 1998), pp. 1-25.

Levine, Lawrence W. "The Unpredictable Past: Reflections on Recent American Historiography," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 94, No. 3. (Jun., 1989), pp. 671-679.

Noggle, Burl. "The Twenties: An New Historiographical Frontier," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 53, No. 2. (Sep., 1966), pp. 299-314.

Paris, Jan and Roslyn Holdzkom. *The Invisible Process: Ingenuity and Cooperation in Finding Women's Lives*. Chapel Hill: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1997. [multiple copies on **reserve** in Jackson Library]

Steckel, Richard H. "The Quality of Census Data for Historical Inquiry: A Research Agenda," *Social Science History*, Vol. 15, No. 4. (Winter, 1991), pp. 579-599.

Websites:

NEH policy on research misconduct:

<http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/researchmisconduct.html>

AHA Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct

<http://www.historians.org/pubs/Free/ProfessionalStandards.cfm#SharedValues>

Models of grant competitions in the humanities:

<http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/fellowships.html>

<http://www.acls.org/grants/Default.aspx?id=480>

<http://www.americanantiquarian.org/longterm.htm>

"The Information Cycle"

<http://www.libraries.psu.edu/instruction/infocycle/infocycle.html>

(requires Flashplayer 5.0 for viewing. If you do not have Flash 5.0 see

<http://www.libraries.psu.edu/instruction/infocycle/> to download.)

Evaluation

Class Participation	10%
Long Research Proposal	60%
Short Research Proposal	30%

There will be a series of required, research and writing exercises designed to help you develop your proposal in stages. The work you produce will be an important focus of class discussion throughout the semester. It is therefore essential that you complete this work on time. Your class participation grade will be based in part on the quality of your work on these assignments. See the following due dates:

- 2 September **Preliminary Topic Description** (use form posted on Bb). Distribute your topic description to the class list **by noon on Tuesday, September 2**. All students should read all of the topic overviews and come to class prepared with questions and strategies for developing the focus of each topic idea.
- 18 September **Research Strategies**. You are pursuing a research project about the entrepreneurial activities of slaves in the antebellum era. Use the online SHC finding aids: <http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv.html> to locate at least one folder or box you would request with research potential for the project. Write a 1-2 page description and analysis of your research process. Your analysis should contain the following information: Explain two or three different search strategies you used and evaluate which one worked best. Also explain the rationale for your final folder/box selection based on how your choice fits your overall research goal. How did you modify your research goal to make it more feasible based on your preliminary search of the finding aids?
- 2 October **Historiography** section due. Select five (5) of the most important works of scholarship for your project and write a historiographical essay that places your project in the context of this scholarship. This essay represents a draft of one section of your final proposal. You may decide to change the scholarship you address in your final proposal. Your essay should be about 12-15 pages. Include a full bibliography of the secondary sources for your project.
- 14 October **Research Problem** due. Distribute a statement of your research problem to the class list by the end of the work day on **Tuesday 14 October**.

- 3 November **Methodology** section and revised bibliography due. Detailed instructions will be provided. Deliver your assignment to me **by noon on Monday 3 November**.
- 13 November **Short Proposal** due (3 single-spaced pages or 6 double-spaced pages) Distribute to the class.
- 4 December **Long Proposal** due (20-25 pages)
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Course Schedule

- 28 August** Getting started: course goals and how we'll achieve them

What is a Research Proposal?

- 4 September** Standards of Professional Conduct/What is original research?/Practical approaches for defining a workable research topic

Read:

NEH policy on research misconduct:

<http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/researchmisconduct.html>

AHA Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct

<http://www.historians.org/pubs/Free/ProfessionalStandards.cfm#SharedValues>

Models of grant competitions for the humanities: (Note: pay particular attention to the guidelines for preparing proposals described on each of these sites.)

<http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/fellowships.html>

<http://www.acls.org/grants/Default.aspx?id=480&linkidentifier=id&itemid=480>

<http://www.americanantiquarian.org/longterm.htm>

Watch:

"The Information Cycle":

<http://www.libraries.psu.edu/instruction/infocycle/infocycle.html>

(requires Flashplayer 5.0 for viewing. If you do not have Flash 5.0 see

<http://www.libraries.psu.edu/instruction/infocycle/> to download.)

Assignment: Preliminary topic overview using the form posted to the web. Distribute your topic description to the class list **by noon on Tuesday, September 2**. All students should read all of the topic overviews and come to class prepared with questions and strategies for developing the focus of each topic idea.

11 September Epistemology of History

Read:

Gaddis, John Lewis. *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

18 September Finding Evidence: Working with archivists on the web and in the archive

Read:

Grigg, Susan, "Archival Practice and the Foundations of Historical Method," *Journal of American History* 78 (June 1991): 228-239.

Paris, Jan and Roslyn Holdzkom. *The Invisible Process: Ingenuity and Cooperation in Finding Women's Lives*. Chapel Hill: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1997.

Assignment: You are pursuing a research project about the entrepreneurial activities of slaves in the antebellum era. Use the online SHC finding aids: <http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv.html> to locate at least one folder or box you would request with research potential for the project. Write a 1-2 page description and analysis of your research process. Your analysis should contain the following information: Explain two or three different search strategies you used and evaluate which one worked best. Also explain the rationale for your final folder/box selection based on how your choice fits your overall research goal. How did you modify your research goal to make it more feasible based on your preliminary search of the finding aids?

What is the Role of Historiography in the Research Process?

25 September What is historiography?

Read:

Noggle, Burl. "The Twenties: An New Historiographical Frontier," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 53, No. 2. (Sep., 1966), pp. 299-314.

Levine, Lawrence W. "The Unpredictable Past: Reflections on Recent American Historiography," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 94, No. 3. (Jun., 1989), pp. 671-679.

2 October No Class

Assignment: Select five (5) of the most important works of scholarship for your project and write a **historiographical essay** that places your project in the context of this scholarship. This essay represents a draft of one section of your final proposal. You may decide to change the scholarship you address in your final proposal. Your essay should be about 12-15 pages. Include a full **bibliography** of the secondary sources for your project.

9 October What is the difference between a research topic and a research problem?

Read:

Kammen, Michael G. "An Americanist's Reprise: The Pervasive Role of Histoire Probleme in Historical Scholarship Concerning the United States Since the 1960s," *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Special Issue: The Challenge of American History. (March 1998), pp. 1-25.

16 October What's your problem?

Assignment:

Distribute a statement of your research problem to the class list by the end of the work day on **Tuesday 14 October**.

What is Methodology?

23 October It's about the nature of the evidence you are using

Read:

Steckel, Richard H. "The Quality of Census Data for Historical Inquiry: A Research Agenda," *Social Science History*, Vol. 15, No. 4. (Winter, 1991), pp. 579-599.

Halpern, Rick. "Oral History and Labor History: A Historiographic Assessment after Twenty-Five Years," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 2. (Sep., 1998), pp. 596-610.

30 October It's about the strategies you employ for analyzing your evidence

Read:

Paris, Jan and Roslyn Holdzkom. *The Invisible Process: Ingenuity and Cooperation in Finding Women's Lives*. Chapel Hill: Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1997.

Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd. "You Must Remember This": Autobiography as Social Critique," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 2. (Sep., 1998), pp. 439-465.

Assignment: Bring to class photocopies of 1-2 pages of a secondary source from your research bibliography in which the scholar discusses a methodological issue that is important for your project or research goals.

Putting the Final Proposal(s) Together

6 November the short version vs. the long version

Assignment: Methodology section and revised bibliography **due by noon on Monday 3 November**.

13 November TBA

Assignment: **Short proposal** due (3 single-spaced pages or 6 double-spaced pages). Distribute to class list.

20 November Short Proposal/peer review

27 November Thanksgiving Holiday

4 December Final **Long Proposal** due (20-25 pages)